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Official Records

First Committee
11th Meeting
Friday, 28 October 1994, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Valencia Rodriguez . . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Observance of Disarmament Week

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): In marking Disarmament Week, which began on 25 October 1994 at today's meeting, the Committee will be continuing the tradition established by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament.

It is a pleasure and an honour for me warmly to welcome to the First Committee His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session. On behalf of all members of the Committee, and on my own behalf, I congratulate Ambassador Essy on his election to the presidency and salute his well-known diplomatic skill and the effectiveness with which he is carrying out his high responsibilities.

It gives me special pleasure to welcome Mr. Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to this special meeting of the First Committee.

As Chairman of the Committee, I wish to begin with a short statement on this special occasion.

The General Assembly proclaimed the week beginning with the date of the founding of the United Nations as a week dedicated to promulgating the objectives of disarmament. The Assembly's proclamation of Disarmament Week should constitute an unremitting appeal to the consciences of all human beings, both leaders and led, to ponder the consequences of the arms race for humankind and to press the urgent need to marshall the energy and resources needed to help achieve the lofty objective of disarmament that the United Nations is striving to attain.

We must recognize that there has been significant progress in recent times, largely as a result of the major political, social and economic changes that have taken place in the world. But a great deal still remains to be done before the idea of disarmament becomes a reality. Hence, on the occasion of Disarmament Week, we must reiterate the call for continued efforts towards that end.

The greatest concern, on which we must all redouble our efforts, is nuclear disarmament. Even though the thunderheads lowering over the world have dissipated for now, the elimination of the threat of nuclear holocaust still remains a central priority both for nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States.

In this context, the extension of the NPT and the 1995 Conference are significant, because the actions taken in that respect will largely determine the world's ability to usher in an era of greater international stability and security. The same goes for the efforts towards the complete and verifiable ban on nuclear tests. The work in these areas being accomplished by the Conference on Disarmament should be highlighted and pushed forward, and the Conference itself must be expanded to reflect the current world situation.

The same energy and resolve must be used in our efforts to put an end to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Conventions banning biological and

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chemical weapons are appropriate mechanisms whose application and implementation will promote greater confidence and security.

Similarly, ending the proliferation in conventional weapons must continue to be a subject of particular interest to us all. It is important to remember that the major armed conflicts causing so many deaths and such desolation and suffering in many parts of the world right now are using those self-same conventional weapons — hence the need to adopt urgent measures to avoid this kind of tragedy. We must ensure greater openness and transparency over conventional weapons and put an end to the spread of and illicit traffick in such weapons.

Emphasis quite rightly has been placed on the fact that the purpose of Disarmament Week should be to focus international attention and mobilize the conscience of all peoples, large and small, in order to form a single, common front on the side of general and complete disarmament. At the same time, the activities of the multilateral organizations, both regional and global, responsible for disarmament-related work must also be bolstered. Both regionally and globally, governmental and non-governmental bodies have an essential role to play here.

I urgently appeal to one and all to act as faithful guardians and watchdogs over how the resolutions of the General Assembly are implemented, because those resolutions must become the creed of the struggle for disarmament so that the dividends from disarmament can be used to alleviate the suffering caused by economic and social backwardness, acute poverty, disease and ignorance.

The media must play a fundamental role in this campaign. I am firmly convinced that they will respond, with all due diligence and commitment, to this urgent appeal from humankind.

I now have the pleasure of calling on the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, to address the First Committee.

Mr. Essy (President of the General Assembly) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the kind words and congratulations you addressed to me. I am most grateful for them. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express to you and to all the delegations on the First Committee my most sincere hope that this session will be constructive and fruitful.

Every year, the President of the General Assembly joins the Committee to celebrate Disarmament Week. I am following in the footsteps of my predecessors because I am fully aware of the high priority that the General Assembly traditionally attaches to disarmament issues. In fact, in the final analysis, the future of our planet depends on disarmament.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a radical change in the global political climate. For decades, negotiations had been conducted within the framework of what could be termed the cold-war syndrome. The international community had become used to this conflict-based relationship and had managed to move forward despite the inherent tensions of the time. That is how it proved possible to take major steps forward along the path towards our ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament by means of a solid system of global multilateral agreements and major regional and bilateral accords.

We are no longer writhing in the throes of the cold war. Today, we are far less afraid that we will be wiped out at the touch of a button. The world we live in, however, is still a very dangerous one because, even if the international security environment really has changed, and even if new prospects for disarmament are opening up, we are at one and the same time witnessing the appearance of highly complex challenges that the international community must address as of now. Efforts to

> "promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources"

are as relevant today as they were 49 years ago, when the Charter was drafted.

We all know that the sharp divides that typified the cold war have given way to a great diversity of problems and to an increasingly complex and unstable system of international political relations. Ethnic conflicts and militant nationalism are posing new threats to international peace. A whole slew of forces that had formerly been held in check have been unleashed, touching off hotbeds of violence and aggression throughout the world. Hundreds of thousands of human beings have perished now that weapons of every kind — from state-of-the-art conventional arms to the humble machete — have been taken up to settle conflicts.

We must put a stop to this state of affairs. First Committee members have a dual mission. Firstly, it is up to them to consolidate effectively the progress made during the cold war. Secondly, they must find the means to meet the new challenges posed by the formulation of new disarmament policies and the development of innovative methods and common approaches aimed at bolstering stability and mutual trust at the lowest possible level of armaments.

In April 1995, the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will meet to review the Treaty and to consider renewing it. For all its flaws, the NPT has, over the past 25 years, made a decisive contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Committee now has an opportunity to explore the possibility of a common approach that would enable us to buttress one of the pillars of international security. I do urge members to try to ensure that a climate of understanding prevails during the coming months, in particular during their deliberations.

This was so in the case of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year that called upon all States to support the multilateral negotiations towards a complete test-ban treaty; this year, in the Conference on Disarmament, the resolution gave rise to a concerted effort to draft a universal, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty.

There is no doubt that the scale of the progress achieved proves the seriousness with which the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament are being taken. Whatever path we choose, there is always a first step to be taken, and my view is that the international community has already taken that step and is moving forward in the right direction.

The other important initiative involves banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. As the Secretary-General noted in his report on the work of the Organization and in the statement he made to the Committee last week, a treaty to that effect will be an important element in the world's efforts to promote disarmament.

If we remain this resolute in our desire and will to put an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ban them, then we must by the same token not neglect other weapons of mass destruction. I therefore welcome the fact that the Preparatory Committee of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is right now taking steps to ensure the implementation of the chemical weapons Convention. This Convention — an international Treaty that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction — spent an arduous 10 years in the negotiation. Its entry into force next year is the more eagerly awaited therefore.

Concerning another equally dangerous weapons category, we look forward with equal eagerness to the finalization and evaluation of a verification system for the Convention on biological and toxin weapons. Success in those efforts would undoubtedly boost the effectiveness of the new regime.

We all know full well that the proliferation of conventional weapons and the particularly destabilizing impact conventional-weapon transfers can have on regional and subregional security are cause for ever-increasing concern. We have seen all too clearly what happens when nothing is done to curb unmonitored transfers of conventional weapons. There can be no doubt that the potential destructive power of these weapons is having serious repercussions on international peace and security.

The Register of Conventional Arms, which promotes openness and transparency, is one of the ways in which Member States can promote confidence in each other's military behaviour, thereby reducing the risk of dangerous misunderstandings.

Alongside these measures at the global level, we should be promoting regional arrangements such as the regime now in place for Latin America and the Caribbean, where the process of strengthening the nuclear-weapon-free zone established under the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been continuing to make rapid progress this year, and likewise in Africa, where a draft treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone is now having the finishing touches put to it.

These are measures which make up part of a whole. The Commission has 22 items on its agenda, but for lack of time I have touched on only a very few. Still, I should like to emphasize the importance and scope of each of those items because they are all part of the disarmament effort at the international level and because they all deserve all our attention. At the dawn of this new era, the diplomacy of disarmament must be specific and realistic, and must take into account the new way the international cards have been dealt.

Once again, I hope that the work of the Committee during the forty-ninth session will be fruitful.

The Chairman *(interpretation from Spanish):* I thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Amara Essy, for his very important statement, and also Mr. Marrack Goulding, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for participating in this special meeting of the Committee on Disarmament and International Security devoted to the observance of disarmament week.

Organization of work

The Chairman *(interpretation from Spanish):* As representatives will recall, at its third informal meeting on Wednesday, 26 October, the Committee, at the request of several delegations, decided to extend the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on all of the agenda items concerning disarmament until Monday, 31 October at 6 p.m. so as to enable delegations to conclude their consultations currently in progress on various texts.

Representatives will also recall that at that informal meeting I said that a decision on the extension of the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions would need to be taken at a formal meeting of the Committee. Accordingly, may I propose that the Committee decide to extend the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions concerning agenda items on disarmament from Thursday, 27 October, to Monday, 31 October at 6 p.m.? If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee accepts my proposal.

It was so decided.

The Chairman *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On the same subject, I should like to ask all delegations kindly to submit their draft resolutions to the Secretariat, particularly those with financial implications, so that they can be processed as quickly as possible. The sooner the draft resolutions are submitted, obviously the sooner the work of the Committee can be completed. It will also help members complete their consultations on the texts and comment on them when the Committee considers them.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.